

# **Nutrition Education in the Food Stamp Program: A National Description**

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# Outline

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- Background
- Methodology
- Preliminary findings (not yet public)

# Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) Background

- State option
- Goal: *to increase the likelihood of food stamp recipients making healthy food choices and choosing active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines and the Food Guide Pyramid*
- Funding: 50% federal reimbursement
- Annual guidance, plans and approval
- Diverse and decentralized
- Growth in funding

# FSNE Systems Review Contract

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- Abt Associates and Health Systems Research
- Objective: a comprehensive and systematic picture of FSNE operations and decision making processes among States, implementing agencies, and local projects in FY 2004

# Research Question Areas

- FSNE organization and decision making
- Target audience
- Nutrition education messages, materials, delivery
- Program evaluation and monitoring
- Staff and training
- Budget and finance

# FSNE Systems Review Methodology

- Data abstraction from FY 2004 all State plans (November 2003-February 2004)
- Web-based survey of all 52 State food stamp agencies and 93 FSNE implementing agencies (February 2005-June 2005)
- In-person interviews in sample of States, implementing agencies and local projects (April 2005-July 2005)

\* IA based sample by type, Region, budget

# Methodology

## Data Collection Instruments

- 2 web-based surveys
  - All State food stamp agencies
  - All implementing agencies
- 6 interview guides
  - Sampled implementing agencies
  - Associated State food stamp agencies
  - Local project directors
  - Nutrition education providers
  - Partner organizations

# Data Collection Results

- Web-based surveys:
  - 50 State food stamp agencies (96% response rate)
  - 84 implementing agencies (90% response rate)
  - Potential sources of inaccurate data
- Site Visit In-person interviews:
  - 34 IA interviews
  - 28 SFSA interviews
  - 22 State partner interviews
  - 67 local agency interviews
  - 43 local partner interviews
  - 32 nutrition educator interviews



# Preliminary Results



# Who is Delivering FSNE?

- 60% of States have only one IA
- 73% of IAs use subcontractors or local projects to deliver FSNE
- 55% of IAs were cooperative extension organizations in FY 2004 (compared to 68% in FY 1997)
- 33% of IAs included a nutrition education network in FY 2004

# Key Roles

- Most planning and implementation decisions are made at the IA level
- Limited SFSA role – target audience or funding issues; 75% of IA said their SFSA was “effective”
- Local autonomy – local partnerships are essential for implementation (schools, TANF, Health Dept.)

# What is the Geographic Coverage of FSNE?

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- Over 80% of U.S. counties have some FSNE coverage
- 32% of IAs increased coverage in FY 2004, 10% decreased coverage

# Who is Being Targeted and Served by FSNE?

Implementing agency target groups:

- Food stamp recipients – 8%

- Food stamp eligibles – 32%

- Low income (>185%) – 52%

- Other – 9%

Among IAs that tracked FSNE clients served:

- 52% were food stamp recipients

- 42% school-aged children

- 36% adults

- 70% women (among adults)

# What Methods Are Used to Deliver FSNE?

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- Almost all IAs use direct education and indirect education approaches; one-third use social marketing approaches
- Multiple group sessions were the most common direct education delivery mode

# What Are the Primary Nutrition Education Messages?

- All IAs promoted increased intake of fruits and vegetables in FY 2004 (compared to 85% of IAs in FY 1997)
- Rather than focus on one or two goals, agencies pursued multiple goals

# What Materials Are Used for Delivery of FSNE?

- 99% of IAs used printed materials, booklets, fact sheets or other handouts (compared to 89% in FY 1997)
- There was a significant increase in the percentage of IAs using recipes and cookbooks in FY 2004 (from 47% to 92%)
- Over three-quarters of IAs use FNS materials, but the same percentage also develop their own materials



# Where Are FSNE Services Provided?

- Most IAs (81%) use public schools and other youth education sites (75%)
- Less than half of IAs report using food stamp office sites

# Qualifications of FSNE Staff?

- Most staff providing FSNE have a bachelor's degree or higher
- 19% are RDs
- Staffing shortages and inability to hire qualified staff were cited by IAs as the major reason for not implementing plans as intended

## **Do FSNE Clients Know Services Are a Benefit of the Food Stamp Program?**

- 96% of State food stamp agencies believe FSNE is an important food stamp benefit
- 88% of IAs believe that FSNE is a benefit of the food stamp program
- Local providers are not as concerned about identifying FSNE as a food stamp benefit
- Concerns about stigma

## Next Steps

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- Draft report
- Final report and public data file – Summer 2006

# FSNE Systems Review

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